

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

U.S. EPA Seeks Comments On Proposed Sewer Plan

Lower Mill Creek Sewer Overflow Proposed Remedy

Hamilton County and Cincinnati, Ohio

January 2013

Your opinion needed

U.S. EPA wants public comments on the revised plan by Hamilton County and the city of Cincinnati to reduce sewer overflows to Lower Mill Creek. The comment period runs from Jan. 10 to Feb. 10, 2013.

You can submit written statements:

- Via the Web at www.epa.gov/region5/water/lowermillcreek/
- Send an email to U.S. EPA at R5_hamiltoncounty_comments@epa.gov
- Use the enclosed comment form and mail to U.S. EPA
- Fax to EPA's Sudhir Desai at 312-692-2981

Read the documents

The *Revised Original Lower Mill Creek Partial Remedy* and other official documents about sewer overflows in Hamilton County, Ohio, are available on U.S. EPA's website, www.epa.gov/region5/water/lowermillcreek

Additional information can be found on the Metropolitan Sewer District website at: www.projectgroundwork.org/projects/lowermillcreek/index.htm

Want to talk to a real person? See the back page for a list of contacts.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is seeking public comments on a proposed plan to reduce sewer overflows to Lower Mill Creek. Hamilton County commissioners and the city of Cincinnati submitted a document in December called the *Revised Original Lower Mill Creek Partial Remedy* to federal, state and local environmental regulators. The proposal lists a number of measures to reduce the amount of stormwater that currently enters the Lower Mill Creek sewer system. The proposed plan includes innovative "green" infrastructure techniques to reduce sewer flows without the need for expensive water control structures. Supporters say the plan would substantially reduce raw sewage discharges from locations in the sewer system called "combined sewer overflows" or CSOs.

U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA and the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) will consider the revised plan. U.S. EPA invites public comments on the proposal. A 30-day comment period will open Jan. 10 and run to Feb. 10. A decision on the proposed alternative sewer plan will likely be made by regulators this spring. See the left-hand box on ways you can participate in the decision-making process.

Legal history

The revised Lower Mill Creek water plan was originally prompted by two court orders to reduce sewer overflows in the area served by the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSDGC). In 2010, the U.S. District Court entered an amendment to those orders. The amendment requires Hamilton County and the city of Cincinnati to implement what was originally a \$3.3 billion remedy that was referred to as the "Wet Weather Improvement Program" or WWIP. The WWIP will address billions of gallons of untreated overflows discharging to local water bodies and the Ohio River each year.

In the legal amendment, U.S. EPA agreed to a phased-in schedule because of the high cost of the cleanup measures and the financial burden in the form of higher water rates it will put on area businesses and residents. The amendments also allowed the county and city to propose a money-saving alternative approach to deal with overflows in the Lower Mill Creek portion of the sewer district's service area. This alternative approach is now being released for public comment. Regulators will approve the plan if it meets the requirements of the original WWIP.

Revised plan

The alternative plan now under consideration was formulated during 2010-2012 when the Metropolitan Sewer District updated its CSO system model and conducted extensive engineering and cost analyses.

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Beginning in the summer of 2012, MSDGC held weekly phone calls with staff from U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA, and ORSANCO. Public outreach and public participation efforts were also carried out by MSDGC and Hamilton County to solicit public input on the potential alternative remedy for Lower Mill Creek.

In December 2012, MSDGC, on behalf of the county and the city, submitted the revised plan to U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA and ORSANCO.

The revised plan proposes to employ a strategic separation approach implemented on a watershed-by-watershed basis. In selected watersheds, stormwater would be removed from the wastewater collection system through a combination of green infrastructure and conventional methods. Green infrastructure can involve the use of greenways, rain gardens, swales,

native landscaping and porous pavement to reduce runoff and flooding and improve water quality.

Around one stream called Lick Run, a new green corridor is proposed in the alternative plan that would expose a long-buried stream and allow for overland flow of stormwater. The Lick Run green corridor could potentially provide valuable community benefits to distressed community areas, in addition to serving as a significant component of the wet weather control program.

One requirement of the original wet weather improvement program was for Hamilton County and Cincinnati to construct a deep tunnel structure to store and channel excess stormwater. Officials hope the proposed revised plan will eliminate the need for this very expensive tunnel project.

Contact U.S. EPA

For questions on how to comment on the alternative plan to control sewer overflows on Lower Mill Creek you can contact these U.S. EPA experts:

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EPA toll-free: 800-621-8431, 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., weekdays

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Comment Sheet

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